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4 Months After Pact, Contras' Leaders Clash

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SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, Sept. 25 — In spite of a formal agreement to work together, top Nicaraguan guerrilla leaders continue to have serious political differences, according to senior American and rebel officials.

The disputes do not appear to be as serious as they were four months ago when some top officials threatened to resign from the United Nicaraguan Opposition, the main rebel organization.

But with \$100 million in American aid to the guerrillas scheduled to begin flowing next month, the discord among rebel leaders worries Reagan Administration officials. It also underscores the difficulty of expanding the guerrilla army formed by the Central Intelligence Agency into a united rebel movement with a democratically aligned civilian leadership.

"At times I think they are more interested in personal power than in making this thing work and taking out the Sandinistas," a senior American official said.

The chief point of contention among the rebel leaders, according to both rebel and American officials, is the decision of the Honduras-based guerrilla army last month to form a separate council of military commanders.

The council is to act as the voice of the guerrilla military force.

The creation of the council is important, rebel officials say, because it challenges the attempt to guarantee civilian control of military forces and to make the Honduras-based Nicaraguan Democratic Force guerrilla army less of a separate group beholden only to itself.

Several of the Honduras-based guerrilla commanders supported the dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle before his overthrow in 1979. Some American officials and rebel civilian leaders fear that these ultra-conservative commanders and their civilian backers

could win the upper hand if they ever succeed in toppling the governing Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Two of the three directors of the United Nicaraguan Opposition have strongly criticized the formation of the military council. The two, Alfonso Robelo and Arturo Cruz, demanded and apparently received greater control over rebel strategy and military forces in a showdown with the third rebel director, Adolfo Calero, four months ago.

Mr. Calero is the civilian head of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force. Since it is by far the biggest rebel fighting force, Mr. Cruz and Mr. Robelo have been concerned that his control over it gives him and his followers too much of a say over the guerrilla movement.

They say also that the military council was formed without the approval of the

rebel directorate required under the accord reached four months ago and therefore weakened civilian control of the military. "It's a step backward," Mr. Cruz said in a telephone interview. "It contradicts agreements we have made to act together."

Mr. Calero was traveling and could not be reached for comment. Both Mr. Robelo and Mr. Cruz said that they believed the issue could be resolved, but that it would require negotiation. The three rebel directors will discuss the military council at a meeting next week, rebel sources said.

"We aren't going to break up over this," Mr. Robelo said. "But it does not reflect the positive attitude to work together that I have insisted on."

The issue promises to be difficult because the formation of the military

council appears to be an effort to maintain separate control of the rebel army by relying on the old command structure first established by the Central Intelligence Agency four years ago.

The military council also worries Mr. Cruz and Mr. Robelo because it seems to be linked to the formation of a conservative exiled political party called the Nicaragua Democratic Effort. The party appears to back Mr. Calero and the Honduran-based army commanders and Mr. Calero has recently been raising private funds that may have political purposes, according to some rebel forces.

Mr. Calero's supporters say the money is to help the war effort and note that Mr. Cruz has also begun forming a political party to buttress his own power.